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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/562,434	12/28/2005	Alberto Di Lullo	282230US0XPCT	3858
22850	7590	04/03/2007	EXAMINER	
OBLON, SPIVAK, MCCLELLAND, MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314			KRECK, JOHN J	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
				3673
SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE		NOTIFICATION DATE		DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS		04/03/2007		ELECTRONIC

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Notice of this Office communication was sent electronically on the above-indicated "Notification Date" and has a shortened statutory period for reply of 3 MONTHS from 04/03/2007.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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<b>Office Action Summary</b>	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/562,434	DI LULLO ET AL.
Examiner	Art Unit	
John Kreck	3673	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

#### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

#### Status

- 1)  Responsive to communication(s) filed on 04 January 2007.
- 2a)  This action is FINAL. 2b)  This action is non-final.
- 3)  Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

#### Disposition of Claims

- 4)  Claim(s) 1-4 and 8-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5)  Claim(s) 9-16, 19 and 20 is/are allowed.
- 6)  Claim(s) 1-4 and 8 is/are rejected.
- 7)  Claim(s) 17, 18 is/are objected to.
- 8)  Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

#### Application Papers

- 9)  The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10)  The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a)  accepted or b)  objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11)  The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

#### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12)  Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).  
a)  All b)  Some \* c)  None of:
  1.  Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2.  Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3.  Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

#### Attachment(s)

- 1)  Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2)  Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3)  Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 4)  Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 5)  Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6)  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### DETAILED ACTION

The amendment dated 1/4/07 has been entered.

Claims 1-4 and 8-20 are pending.

#### *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103*

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

1. Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pickren (U.S. Patent number 6,582,025) in view of Womack (U.S. Patent number 5,340,383).

Pickren discloses a process of disposal of sulfur including melting the sulfur and injecting into geological structures. Pickren lacks the temperature of the geologic structures in the claimed range, but teaches that salt domes are to be used.

Womack (e.g. col. 1, lines 33-40 and 65-67) discloses the importance of storing sulfur in molten state, at temperatures in the range 248°-302°F (i.e. 120°-150°C). This temperature range falls entirely within the claimed 90-160°C. One of ordinary skill in the art would have understood that storage in a molten state would be advantageous, at least because it would eliminate the need for an extra step of melting.

Official Notice is taken of the fact that salt domes and other geologic structures having temperatures in the range of 90-160°C and/or 120°-150°C are known.

One of ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to have used a geologic structure or salt dome with a temperature in the range of 90-160°; based on the teaching in Womack that storage in molten state is desirable.

Regarding claim 2: the Pickren reference teaches the sulfur from oil/gas treatment (i.e. fossil hydrocarbons).

Regarding claim 3: the Pickren reference teaches the Claus process.

Regarding claim 4: the Pickren reference teaches the storage site ("holding tank" col. 11, line 44.)

2. Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pickren and Womack as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Bailey (U.S. Patent number 3,736,744)

Pickren fails to teach the salt dome being the oil/gas reservoir.

Bailey provides evidence that such salt domes frequently include oil/gas reservoirs. One of ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to have used a salt dome which had previously been an oil reservoir, since it would be conveniently located (i.e. near the oil facilities, and hence the claus process) and conveniently empty.

#### ***Allowable Subject Matter***

3. Claims 9-16, 19, and 20 are allowed.

4. Claims 17 and 18 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

***Response to Arguments***

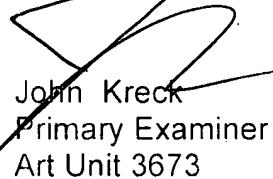
5. Applicant's arguments, filed 1/4/07, with respect to the rejection(s) of claim(s) 1-4 and 8 have been fully considered and are persuasive. Therefore, the rejection has been withdrawn. However, upon further consideration, a new ground(s) of rejection is made in view of Womack.

6. Applicant's further arguments, concerning new claims 17 and 18 are persuasive: Pickren teaches against the use of fractured or matrix structures.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to John Kreck whose telephone number is 571-272-7042. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thurs 530am-2pm; Fri: telework.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patricia Engle can be reached on 571-272-6660. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

  
John Kreck  
Primary Examiner  
Art Unit 3673

29 March 2007